

## Questions and Answers: Bad Breath

### Q. What causes bad breath?

A. Bacteria on the tongue and teeth are usually to blame for bad breath. Sometimes bad breath could signal a serious medical disorder, or it could be something as simple as rotting food stuck between teeth. Tobacco products can cause bad breath, and so can dry mouth. Odiferous and spicy foods can contribute to bad breath as well.

### Q. How can I freshen up my breath?

A. Follow these tips:

- Brush your teeth at least twice a day, paying special attention to the gum line. Remember to brush your tongue gently, too.
- Floss once a day.
- Avoid alcohol and smoking. But do drink plenty of water.
- Avoid garlic and onion.
- When you can't brush, try rinsing your mouth with water.
- See a dentist for regular cleanings.
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### Q. Could bad breath be a sign of something more serious?

A. Yes. It could be an infection in the respiratory tract, chronic sinusitis, diabetes, chronic bronchitis, gastrointestinal disturbance, or a problem with the liver or kidney. If your bad breath persists without an obvious cause, such as smoking or certain foods, then visit your doctor.

"Bad Breath." Mouth Healthy, American Dental Association, <http://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/b/bad-breath.aspx> Accessed 2013.

"MedlinePlus Medical Encyclopedia: Breath Odor." U.S. National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, February 22, 2012.

